

Sagamore Hill

National Historic Site
New York

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Official Map and Guide



Above: The Roosevelts (left to right): Ethel, TR, Theodore Jr., Archie, Alice, Kermit, Edith Roosevelt, Quentin.
Below: TR in his library.
Left to right: Leading the family on a hike; keeping time as children race. Of his children he

wrote: "They often went barefoot... They swam, they tramped, they boated, they coasted and skated in winter; they were... friends with the cows, chickens, pigs, and other livestock."

"The house stands right on the top of the hill, separated by fields and belts of woodland from all other houses, and looks out over the bay and the Sound. We see the sun go down beyond long reaches of land and of water.... We love all the seasons; the snows and bare woods of winter; the rush of growing things and the blossom-spray of spring; the yellow grain, the ripening fruits and tasselled corn, and the deep, leafy shades that are heralded by 'the green dance of summer'; and the sharp fall winds that tear the brilliant banners with which the trees greet the dying year."

Theodore Roosevelt



TR's Rough Rider hat and sword



Refuge for a Public Man



When Theodore Roosevelt was 15, his father established the family's summer residence at Oyster Bay, where the boy spent his vacations exploring the fields and woodlands on nearby Cove Neck. Ten years later in 1880, young Roosevelt and his fiancée, Alice Hathaway Lee, purchased the hill on Cove Neck where his home now stands. The hill was then barren of trees, and a barn was the only building. For this property he put down \$10,000 and assumed a 20-year mortgage for the \$20,000 balance. The total area of the property was 155 acres, of which he kept 95, selling the rest to relatives.

The New York architectural firm of Lamb and Rich drew up the plans for the house. But before the final agreement for its construction was signed, Roosevelt's wife and his mother

died in the family's New York home on the same day in 1884. His wife died of Bright's disease less than 48 hours after their first child, named Alice after her, was born. Determined to have a suitable home for his infant daughter, Roosevelt soon contracted with John A. Wood & Son of Lawrence, Long Island, to build for \$16,975 the house he and his wife had planned. After its completion in 1885, Roosevelt's sister Anna moved in with the baby Alice, while he divided his time between the new house and his ranch in North Dakota.

Roosevelt had originally planned to name the house and property "Leeholm" in honor of his first wife Alice Lee. But he began seeing Edith Kermit Carow, a childhood playmate, and he decided instead to call the estate, in his words, "Sagamore Hill... from the old Sagamore Mohannis, who as Chief of his little tribe, signed away his rights to the land." In December 1886 Roosevelt remarried, and the following spring the couple moved into Sagamore Hill. Except for absences imposed by his public career, the Roosevelts spent the rest of their lives here. Three of their children, Theodore Jr., Kermit, and Ethel, were born at Sagamore Hill.

Not only was Sagamore Hill the center of the day-to-day administration of the country's affairs during the summers from 1902 to 1909,

but it was the site of dramatic events of national and international importance. One occurred on the August day in 1905 when Roosevelt separately met the envoys of warring Russia and Japan in the library at Sagamore Hill, and then brought them face-to-face. There they inaugurated the conference that resulted in the Treaty of Portsmouth (New Hampshire) on September 5, 1905, ending the conflict and earning TR the Nobel peace prize.

The doings of the Roosevelts and their kin filled reams of copy filed by correspondents who kept watch at the Summer White House. The President was an ardent advocate of what he called "the strenuous life," and he could frequently be seen joining the children in their games and taking them for a hike or swim, chopping wood, riding horseback, or striding across the fields and through the woods he loved. Occasionally there would be a mournful procession of children, accompanied by President and Mrs. Roosevelt, to the small animal cemetery to bury a family pet.

"I wonder if you will ever know how I love Sagamore Hill," Roosevelt said to his wife as he lay ill on January 5, 1919. The next day he died in his sleep at the age of 60. Edith Roosevelt lived on here until her death in 1948 at the age of 87.

Exploring Sagamore Hill



Library



Dining Room



North Room

Sagamore Hill is a rambling 23-room Victorian structure of wood frame and brick. It is little changed from when it was the home of a distinguished American and his family. Furnishings throughout the house are mostly original pieces used and loved by the Roosevelt family. On the first floor are a large center hall, the library that served as TR's private office, the dining room, the kitchen, and the drawing room. This room was Mrs. Roosevelt's domain, the one place she could demand privacy.

The spacious north room, added in 1905, was designed by Roosevelt's friend, C. Grant LaFarge, son of the artist John LaFarge. The 30- by 40-foot room is built of Philippine and American woods: mahogany, black walnut, swamp cypress, and hazel. Filled with hunting trophies, books, paintings, flags, and furniture, the north room vividly reflects the spirit of Theodore Roosevelt.

The second floor contains bedrooms, the nursery, guest rooms, and the room with the great porcelain bathtub. Theodore Roosevelt Jr. once recalled that the tub's wastepipe made "the most astonishing series of gurgles" when the water ran out. "We were told by our Irish nurse that these were the outcries of the 'faucet lady' and we watched with care to see if we could catch a glimpse of her head in the pipe."

The Gun Room, housing Roosevelt's collection of hunting arms, is on the top floor. Here he sometimes went to entertain his friends, away from the bustle of the household. Here, too, he wrote many of his books, articles, and speeches. Other rooms on this floor include quarters for the household staff of six, a sewing room, and Theodore Roosevelt Jr.'s bedroom as it was in his precollege days. On the south and west sides of the house is the spacious piazza from which Roosevelt looked out over Oyster Bay Harbor and Long Island Sound. On the grounds are landscaped gardens and, nearby, the Old Orchard Museum, formerly General Theodore Roosevelt Jr.'s home.

In 1948, after the death of Mrs. Roosevelt, Sagamore Hill, its contents, and 83 acres of land were purchased by the Theodore Roosevelt Association, a nonprofit corporation founded in 1919 to recall "to the American people Mr. Roosevelt's personality and achievements, and the ideals of individual and national life that he preached and practiced." In 1963 the association presented the house and property at Sagamore Hill, the house where Roosevelt was born in New York City, and a \$500,000 endowment to the American people as a gift. The New York City home, at 28 East 20th Street in Manhattan, was designated Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site.

TR: The Strenuous Life

For many, he was the most fascinating man ever to lead the nation. An appealing mixture of high moral purpose and sometimes humorous enthusiasm for life has made Theodore Roosevelt an irresistible subject for both scholars and the popular press, which often portrayed "Teddy" as more outlandish than his actions warranted. His range of activities and achievements can only be hinted at here.

1858: Born October 27 in New York City to Theodore Roosevelt Sr. and Martha Bulloch Roosevelt.

1880: Graduated Harvard College; married Alice Hathaway Lee.

1882-84: Served in New York State Assembly.

1884: Death of TR's mother and wife Alice Lee.

1884-86: Cattle rancher in Dakota Territory.

1886: Married Edith Kermit Carow.

1889-95: Member, U.S. Civil Service Commission.

1895-97: President, Board of Police Commissioners of New York City

1897-98: Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

1898: Colonel, 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry Regiment ("Rough Riders") in Spanish-American War.

1898-1900: Governor of New York.

1900: Elected Vice-President of United States.

1901-09: President of the United States (sworn in after assassination of William McKinley).

1909-10: African hunting and exploring expedition; toured Europe.

1912: Ran unsuccessfully for President as National Progressive ("Bullmoose") Party candidate.

1913-14: South American expedition.

1917-18: Supported U.S. role in World War I.

1918: Roosevelt's son Quentin shot down and killed over France.

1919: Died in sleep, January 6 at Sagamore Hill.

Roosevelt was an extraordinary combination of bluff, exuberant man of action and bookish, reflective man of letters. Reading was his solace and his refuge, and TR's spirit at Sagamore Hill is evoked by the more than 6,000 books found throughout the house. Biography, the classics, history, poetry, fiction, science—his reading was broad and deep. Somehow, in a life crowded with enormous public and family responsibilities, he also found time to write more than 30 volumes—histories, biographies, social and political commentary, natural science, memoirs, travel writing, adventure tales, and countless editorials, essays, and articles. By his own admission he was not an original thinker, but he was an excellent writer whose incisive thoughts on a wide range of topics still command our interest.

About Your Visit

Sagamore Hill National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior. The superintendent's address is 20 Sagamore Hill Road, Oyster Bay, NY 11771.

Access to the Theodore Roosevelt Home is by guided tour; there is a fee. Tours fill up early during the spring and summer; we strongly recommend that visitors arrive early in the day during those months. In the summer there are guided nature walks. Tour tickets and publications are available at the visitor center. The site is closed Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1. Check with the park staff for days and hours of operation. Call 516-922-4447.

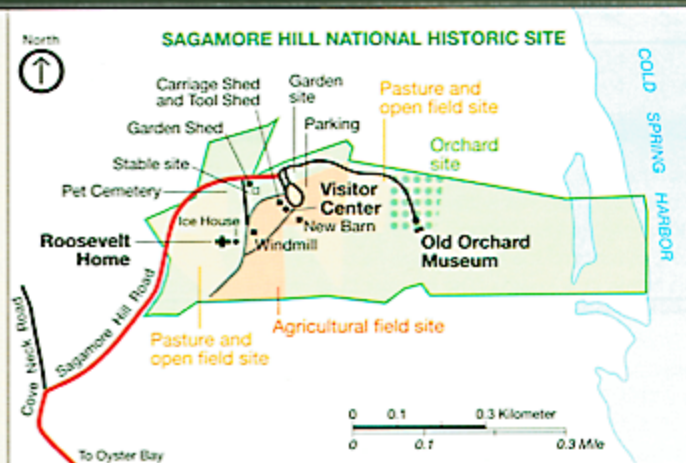
Sagamore Hill is at the end of Cove Neck Road, Oyster Bay, Long Island, N.Y., and can be reached by the Long Island Railroad from New York City's Pennsylvania Station at Seventh Ave. and 33rd St. Taxis meet all trains. The easiest car route is via the Long Island Expressway to exit 41 North (N.Y. 106 North). Take this road toward Oyster Bay and follow signs to Sagamore Hill.

Old Orchard Museum: This Georgian home was built in 1937 for Gen. Theodore Roosevelt Jr. After his death and that of his wife in 1960, the house was included in the 1963 gift of the Theodore Roosevelt Association. The museum includes exhibits on TR's political career, family life at Sagamore Hill, and the lives of his children. Film programs are presented on a regular schedule.

For Your Safety: Please keep to the paths to avoid poison ivy and ticks. Heat exhaustion is not uncommon in the summer, so judge your limits. Many park fences are historic, and their age makes them unsafe for climbing.

Accessibility: The site grounds, the first floor of the Theodore Roosevelt Home, and the Old Orchard Museum are accessible to persons with disabilities. The audiovisual program in the museum is closed captioned.

Carry or keep your pet leashed. Rights of property owners around the site must be respected; do not climb trees or fences or walk past site boundaries.



The Roosevelt Farm

It is easy to forget that Sagamore Hill was a working farm when Roosevelt lived there. He grew wheat, corn, hay, timothy, barley, and rye and raised cattle and

hogs. There was also a three-acre garden for vegetables and flowers. Most of the family was involved with the farm: The children had their own sections in the gar-

den to cultivate. Mrs. Roosevelt kept the books for the farm, and Roosevelt himself often helped with the haying and other chores.

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